

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 2

This chapter contains the prophet's call, commission, and instruction to prophesy. The preparation to it is in (<sup>211b</sup>Ezekiel 2:1,2); being fallen upon his face, he is bid to stand upon his feet, with a promise to speak to him; and the Spirit entering into him, he is set by him on his feet, and he hears what is spoken to him; then follows his mission to the children of Israel, who are described as rebellious, impudent, and stiff-hearted; and to whom he is sent, to render them inexcusable, (<sup>211b</sup>Ezekiel 2:3-5); and he is exhorted not to be afraid of their words, nor dismayed at their looks, however fierce and furious they might be; but faithfully declare his message, and not be discouraged, should it be without success, (<sup>211b</sup>Ezekiel 2:6,7); and he is instructed not to be rebellious, as they were; but open his mouth and eat what should be given him, (<sup>211b</sup>Ezekiel 2:8); when, in a visionary way, a hand was seen, and a roll in it, and this spread before him, written within and without, full of lamentation, mourning, and woes, as a symbol of the substance of his prophecy, (<sup>211b</sup>Ezekiel 2:9,10).

**Ver. 1.** *And he said unto me*, &c.] The glorious Person who sat upon the throne, whose appearance is described in the latter part of the preceding chapter:

*son of man*; as he was to be that spake unto him; and so it may denote relation, affection, and familiarity; or otherwise it is expressive of humiliation; of the frail, mean, and low estate of man, through the fall, (<sup>211b</sup>Psalms 8:4); wherefore some think Ezekiel is thus addressed, lest he should be lifted up, and think himself as one of the angels, because he had seen so great a vision; just as the Apostle Paul was humbled, lest he should be exalted above measure, through the visions and revelations he had, (<sup>211b</sup>2 Corinthians 12:7). Kimchi mentions this, but assigns another reason; that because he saw the face of a man in the above vision, he let him know that he was right and good in the eye of God; and was the son of man, and not the son of a lion, &c. which is exceeding weak and trifling. Abendana, besides these, mentions some other reasons given; as that because he saw the "mercavah" or chariot, and ascended to the dignity of the angels on

high, it is as if it was said, there is none born of a woman, as this; or because he was carried out of the holy land, as Adam was drove out of Eden; and therefore called the son of the first Adam, being drove out of Jerusalem, and out of the temple, where he was a priest. It may be observed, that this is a name which our Lord frequently took to himself in his state of humiliation; and that none but Ezekiel, excepting once the Prophet Daniel, is called by this name; and no doubt the reason of it is, because he was an eminent type of Christ; and particularly in his mission and commission, as a prophet, to the rebellious house of Israel:

*stand upon thy feet*; for he was fallen upon his face, at the sight of the vision, (<sup>2013</sup>Ezekiel 1:28); when a divine Person speaks, men ought to stand and hear, and be in a readiness to do his pleasure:

*and I will speak unto thee*; which is said for his encouragement, being spoken by him who has the words of truth and grace, and of eternal life.

**Ver. 2.** *And the spirit entered into me*, &c.] Not his own spirit or soul; for it does not appear that that went out of him upon the sight of the vision; nor any of the ministering spirits, the angels, who are never said to enter into the prophets or people of God; but the Holy Spirit of God; the same Spirit that was in the living creatures, and in the wheels; in the ministers, and in the churches; who entered with his gifts to qualify him for his office as a prophet; and who enters with his graces into the hearts of all the saints, to quicken, renew, comfort, and sanctify them:

*when he spake unto me*; at the same time the Spirit went along with the word; and when the word of Christ is attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, it is effectual:

*and he set me upon my feet*; not he that spake with him, and bid him stand on his feet; but the Spirit; for the word, though it is the word of God, and of Christ, yet is ineffectual without the Spirit; when he enters, he gives the word a place, and it works effectually; when he enters, as the Spirit of life from Christ, the soul is quickened and strengthened; and such that are fallen down stand up; yea, such as are dead arise and stand upon their feet:

*that I heard him that spake unto me*; so as to understand; for the Spirit, who searches the deep things of God, reveals them to his ministers, and causes them to understand the word of Christ, that they may be able to instruct others in it.

**Ver. 3.** *And he said unto me, son of man, &c.*] Now follow his mission and commission, and an account of the persons to whom he was sent:

*I send thee to the children of Israel;* that were captives in Babylon, in Jehoiakim's captivity; so Christ was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, (<sup><4054></sup>Matthew 15:24);

*to a rebellious nation, that hath rebelled against me;* or, "rebellious Gentiles", <sup>f44</sup>; not the nations of the earth, though Ezekiel did prophesy many things concerning them; but the Jews, the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin; or the twelve tribes of Israel, called Gentiles, because they joined with them in their idolatries; and, as Kimchi says, were divided in their evil works; some worshipping the gods of the Ammonites; and some the gods of the Moabites; and all guilty of rebellion and treason in so doing against the God of heaven:

*they and their fathers have transgressed against me, [even] unto this very day;* which is an aggravation of their rebellion; their fathers had sinned, and they had followed their ill examples, and had continued therein to that day; and as they, did to the times of Christ, when they were about to till up the measure of their iniquity, (<sup><4125></sup>Matthew 23:31,32).

**Ver. 4.** *For [they are] impudent children, &c.*] "Hard of face", <sup>f45</sup>; as is commonly said of impudent persons, that they are brasen faced; they had a whore's forehead, and refused to be ashamed, and made their faces harder than a rock, (<sup><2403></sup>Jeremiah 3:3 5:3); they declared their sin as Sodam, and hid it not; they sinned openly, and could not blush at it:

*and stiffhearted;* or, "strong of heart" <sup>f46</sup>; whose hearts were like an adamant stone, and harder than the nether millstone; impenitent, obdurate, and inflexible; they were not only stiff-necked, as Stephen says they were in his time, and always had been; but stiff-hearted; they were not subject to the law of God now, nor would they submit to the Gospel and ordinances of Christ in his time, and in the times of his apostles, nor to his righteousness, (<sup><5103></sup>Romans 10:3);

*I do send thee unto them;* even to such as they are: this is a repetition, and a confirmation, of his mission; and suggests, that though they were such, he should not refuse to go to them, since he had sent him:

*and thou shalt say unto them, thus saith the Lord God:* that what he said came from the Lord, and was spoken in his name.

**Ver. 5.** *And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear,* &c.] Or “cease”<sup>f47</sup>; that is, from hearing, as Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it; or from sinning, as the Targum. The sense is, whether they would hear the word of the Lord, as spoken by the prophet, attend unto it, receive it, and obey it; or whether they would reject it, turn their backs on it, and discontinue hearing it; or whether they would so hear as to leave their sinful course of life, or not: this the prophet could not know beforehand, nor should he be concerned about it, or be discouraged if his ministry should be fruitless; since he could not expect much from them:

*(for they [are] a rebellious house)*; or, “a house of rebellion”<sup>f48</sup>; a most rebellious one; hard of heart, face, and neck:

*yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them*; so that they were left without excuse, which was the end of the prophet’s being sent unto them; there was little or no hope of reclaiming them; but, however, by such a step taken, they could not say that they had no prophet sent to reprove them for their sins, and warn them of their danger; had they, they would have listened to him, and so have escaped the evils that came upon them,

**Ver. 6.** *And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them,* &c.] Of any of them, the greatest among them, their princes and nobles; who, by their grandeur and authority, their stern looks, and big words, might awe and terrify him; wherefore it follows:

*neither be afraid of their words*; of their calumnies, revilings, and reproaches, their scoffs and jeers, their menaces and threatenings:

*though briers and thorns [be] with thee*; that is, men comparable to such; wicked men are like to briers and thorns, (<sup>236</sup>2 Samuel 23:6 <sup>2704</sup>Isaiah 27:4); are grieving, pricking, and distressing to good men, and are of no worth and value; are useless and unprofitable, and fit fuel for everlasting burning. The Targum is,

“for they are rebellious, and hard against thee;”

so Jarchi and Kimchi explain the first word, **pybrs**, translated “briers”, as signifying rebellious and disobedient; though the former observes, that R. Donesh interprets it of a kind of thorns, of which there are twenty names, and this is one:

*and thou dost dwell among scorpions*; that is, as the Targum paraphrases it,

“thou dwellest in the midst of a people whose works are like to scorpions.”

Some interpret it, as Kimchi observes, of sharp thorns, of a thorny plant that grows in the form of a scorpion<sup>f49</sup>; but scorpions here are a kind of serpents, subtle, venomous, and mischievous, which have stings in their tails; which, as Pliny says, they are continually thrusting out, and striking with, that they may lose no opportunity of doing hurt<sup>f50</sup>; and fitly describe wicked men their subtlety and mischievous nature,

*be not afraid of their words*; as before; with which they are like briars, thorns, and scorpions, being very grievous, defamatory, and mischievous:

*nor be dismayed at their looks*: their frowning furious, and angry countenances; forbidding with which, as well as with their words, the prophet from prophesying unto them:

*though*, or “for”,

*they [be] a rebellious house*; (see Gill on “~~2015~~Ezekiel 2:5”).

**Ver. 7.** *And thou shall speak my words unto them*, &c.] Not his own words, but those the Lord should put into his mouth. The Targum is,

“and thou shall prophesy the words of my prophecy unto them:”

*whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*; (see Gill on “~~2015~~Ezekiel 2:5”);

*for they are most rebellious*; or “rebellion”<sup>f51</sup> itself; as the carnal mind is said to be “enmity” itself against God, (~~8017~~Romans 8:7); which aggravates their character and state.

**Ver. 8.** *But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee*, &c.] Which was necessary because he was to speak not his own words, but the Lord’s, and therefore ought to hear before he spoke; and indeed those that speak in a public way, for the instruction of others, ought to hear and learn of Christ first:

*be not thou rebellious, like that rebellious house*; who would not hear what was said unto them; but they were not to be imitated no, not in a

lesser degree: the prophet was to avoid everything that looked like rebellion; as in, attention to what was said to him hesitation about it, or backwardness to publish it;

*open thy mouth*; be ready to receive what should be given, as a symbol of the prophecy he was to deliver. The Targum is,

“incline thy soul, and receive what I give thee.”

Jarchi’s note is incline thine ear and hear and let it be sweet to thee, as if thou didst eat food for hunger; and Kimchi observes, the intention of the figurative expression is to learn the words of the prophecy, and to remember them:

*and eat that I give thee*; which may be safely done; for Christ gives his ministers and people nothing but what is wholesome; his doctrines are wholesome words and may be eaten without fear, (<sup>400</sup>1 Timothy 6:3).

**Ver. 9.** *And when I looked, behold, an hand [was] sent unto me*, &c.] Not of an angel, but of Christ himself, in a visionary way; for this was not a real hand, but the likeness of one, as in (<sup>400</sup>Ezekiel 8:3); and so the Targum here,

“and I saw, and behold, the likeness of a hand stretched out on the side to me.”

This symbol was to show that his prophecy, that he was sent to deliver, was from heaven and came from Christ; and that hand that delivered it to him would protect and defend him:

*and, lo a roll of a book [was] therein*; held in it, and held forth by it, to the prophet. Books were frequently written on parchment or vellum, and rolled about a stick, in form of a cylinder; and hence they were called volumes or rolls, (<sup>400</sup>Psalms 40:7). This roll was a symbol of the prophecy of this book.

**Ver. 10.** *And he spread it before me*, &c.] Unrolled it, that what was written in it might be seen and read; that so, understanding it, he might deliver the contents of it to the people: thus the Gospel, and the mysteries of it, must be explained by Christ to his ministers; and their understandings must be opened before they will be capable of making them known to others: and

*it [was] written within and without*; on the back, of the vellum or parchment as well as inside; and such writings were called “opisthographa”; of this kind was the book John saw (~~(110)~~ Revelation 5:1). It was usual only to write on the inside; but when they had a great deal to write, then they wrote on the backside also<sup>f52</sup>; so that this roll being thus written denotes the largeness and abundance of the prophecies contained in this book; some respecting the Jews, and others the nations of the world. The Targum is,

“it was written before and behind, what was from the beginning, and what shall be in the end:”

*and [there were] written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe*; afflictions, chastisements, and punishments, that should be inflicted upon the Jews, and other nations of the world; which, when made known to them, and especially when inflicted on them, would occasion sorrow and distress among them. In the Talmud, “lamentations” are interpreted of the punishments of the righteous in this world; “mourning” of the gift of reward to the righteous in the world to come; and “woe” of the punishments of the wicked in the world to come<sup>f53</sup>. The Targum is,

“if the house of Israel transgress the law, the people shall rule over them; but, if they keep the law, lamentation, and mourning, and sorrow, shall cease from them.”